

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 DHA-02 TRSE-00
OMB-01 /099 W
-----052129Z 024605 /70

P R 052152Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2524
INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USMISSION USUN
CINCEUR
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 13373

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR,MOPS, SS, MR, MO, AG, FR
SUBJECT: QUAI COMMENTS ON POLISAIRO ATTACK ON ZOUEATE

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 1026; ALGIERS 1121 (BOTH NOTAL)

1. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTORS FOR NORTH
AFRICA (ALBIS) AND FOR FRANCOPHONE AFRICA (LA ROCHERE)
REVEAL DEEP FRENCH CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS
OF THE LATEST POLISARIO ATTACK IN MAURITANIA. THE
STRIKE AT ZOUEATE CONFIRMED THE ALMOST TOTAL USE-
LESSNESS OF THE MAURITANIAN ARMY, A SITUATION THAT
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THE FRENCH BELIEVE COULD NOT BE REMEDIED IN LESS
THAN TWO YEARS.

2. THE QUAI IS UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE BASIC MOTIVATION
FOR THE ATTACK. IT MAY BE AIMED AT DISCREDITING THE
OULD DADDAH REGIME AND CAUSING IT TO FALL AND BE
REPLACED BY A GOVERNMENT READY TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE

POLISARIO AND ALGERIA. BUT IT MIGHT BE DESIGNED TO DRAW THE MOROCCANS FURTHER INTO MAURITANIA, THUS ROUSING MAURITANIAN NATIONALISM, ALWAYS READY TO BELIEVE THE WORST ABOUT MOROCCO. LA ROCHERE THOUGHT TWO OR THREE SIMILAR ATTACKS WOULD SPELL THE DOOM OF OULD DADDAH. ALBIS SPECULATED THAT HASSAN WOULD NOT ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN SINCE IT PROBABLY WOULD RESULT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SAHRAOUI STATE AND MOROCCO'S ENCIRCLEMENT BY UNFRIENDLY REGIMES. TO PREVENT THIS, HASSAN WOULD DEPLOY MOROCCAN TROOPS THROUGHOUT MAURITANIA, HE THOUGHT.

3. ACCORDING TO LA ROCHERE, THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN OBSERVING BY AIR POLISARIO'S RETREAT WITH ITS FRENCH HOSTAGES. AS OF LATE MAY 4, THE GROUP WAS ALMOST DUE EAST OF ZOUEATE, NOT FAR FROM THE MALI BORDER. THE FRENCH WONDERED WHETHER THE WELL-MOTORIZED GROUP MIGHT NOT BREAK UP INTO TWO OR THREE SMALLER UNITS, WITH SOME PROCEEDING INTO TOTALLY UNDEFENDED AND DESERTED MALIAN TERRITORY, AND OTHERS RETURNING TO ALGERIA.

4. THE SEIZURE OF THE SIX FRENCHMEN, INCLUDING ONE WOMAN, RECALLS ALL TOO VIVIDLY TO THE QUAI THE PROBLEMS POSED BY MADAME CLAUSTRE'S ABDUCTION. HENCE FONMIN GUIRINGAUD'S STRONG LANGUAGE ABOUT "FORCES OF AGGRESSION COMING FROM A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY" AND

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 13373

HIS MAY 4 REQUEST TO THE ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR FOR ASSISTANCE IN SECURING THEIR RETURN. AS EXPECTED, THE ALGERIANS DENY ANY RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE FRENCH EXPECT A LONG NEGOTIATION BEFORE THE HOSTAGES ARE RELEASED. ALBIS NOTED ONE GLIMMER OF HOPE IN THE POLISARIO ACCUSATION THAT FRENCHMEN AT THE MINE HAD DRESSED IN NATIVE DRESS, A STATEMENT THAT MIGHT ALLOW SOME MANEUVERABILITY IN TREATING THE CAPTIVES. LIKE THE ALGERIANS, THE QUAI NONETHELESS DESCRIBES THIS LATEST DISPUTE AS BUT ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF UPS AND DOWNS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. BUT ALBIS NOTED THAT JOLLOUAD HAD JUST VISITED ALGIERS AND
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FEARED THAT LIBYA MIGHT BE DRAWN CLOSER TO ALGERIA, THUS WIDENING THE UNFORTUNATE RADICAL-MODERATE SPLIT IN AFRICA.

5. ALBIS FLATLY DENIED THAT THERE IS ANY POSSIBILITY OF SENDING FRENCH TROOPS TO MAURITANIA. LA ROCHERE, TOO, THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY, BUT ADDED THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE HAD GONE TO THE HEAD OF SOME OF HIS AFRICAN BUREAU COLLEAGUES.
GAMMON

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